

## Assessment of Daily Hassle and well-being among Parents Visiting the Paediatric wing in a Government Hospital in Chennai- A Cross-Sectional Study

Giftson Samuel S<sup>1</sup>, Harshitha Priyadarshene M K<sup>1</sup>, Ganesh Rajendran<sup>1</sup>, Deepavalli Arumuganainar<sup>2\*</sup>, Selvamani Baskaran<sup>1</sup>, Sasikala M<sup>1</sup>, Saravanan Sekaran<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Public Health Dentistry, Priyadarshini Dental College and Hospital, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

<sup>2</sup>Department of Periodontics, Saveetha Dental College and Hospital, Saveetha Institute of Medical and Technical Sciences, Saveetha University, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

<sup>3</sup>Department of Prosthodontics, Saveetha Dental College and Hospital, Saveetha Institute of Medical and Technical Sciences, Saveetha University, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

### Abstract

Parenting challenges can significantly impact mental health and quality of life. Understanding these difficulties is crucial for developing effective support strategies. This study aims to assess the difficulty parents face in raising their children and determine whether fathers or mothers are more adversely affected by child-rearing responsibilities. This cross-sectional study was conducted among parents visiting the pediatric department of ESIC Medical College and Hospital, K. K. Nagar, Chennai. The study investigated the daily parenting challenges among 247 participants, including 129 mothers and 118 fathers. The study's purpose was explained to the participants, who were then provided with the Parental Daily Hassle and SF-12 Quality of Life questionnaires. Participants were given 10 minutes to complete the forms. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS software (version 20.0). It was observed that mothers faced more difficulties than fathers, although the difference was not statistically significant ( $p= 0.089$ ). The survey also indicated that mothers managed daily inconveniences more effectively and had a better quality of life compared to fathers ( $p= 0.0692$ ). Parents of children under four reported experiencing more challenges and difficulties in handling daily tasks. Parenting challenges are correlated with mental health issues, particularly for parents of young children. The findings of the study, thus, underscore the need for targeted strategies to manage parental stress, including mental health support and parenting education programs, to improve family well-being.

**Keywords:** Child Rearing, Mental Health, Parenting Stress, Psychological, Quality of Life.

### Introduction

Parenting is a challenging endeavour, further complicated by the interplay between parents' unique characteristics and perspectives and the behaviour and development of their children. Historically, most research on parenting has concentrated on the effects of various parenting styles on children. However, more recent efforts have examined the factors that might influence

parenting behaviours [1]. Raising children and meeting their needs is a perpetual challenge for parents in any family, often involving behaviour that can be annoying and frustrating. Every parent has encountered many daily situations, such as being nagged or whined at, mediating sibling disputes, and repeatedly cleaning up their children's messes. Although any single incident may seem minor, the cumulative effect of these occurrences over a

day, several days, or longer can become a significant source of stress for parents. The interpretation and meaning parents assign to these events can substantially impact their functioning, family, and children.

Daily parenting challenges include the difficulties and annoyances related to the obligations of child care and education in routine living, such as tidying up children's disarray, mediating sibling disputes, and mitigating temper tantrums [2]. Given that these hassles are repetitive and persistent, the cumulative effect of these comparatively insignificant daily pressures can lead to significant adaptational challenges for parents [3]. The nature of these hassles, characterized by their annoying, frustrating, and distressing qualities, plays a crucial role in parents' daily interactions with their environment. While some of these annoyances may be situational and infrequent, others recur due to predictable needs, particularly in families with young children. This ongoing interaction often creates situations that challenge or interfere with parental responsibilities, and the overall impact of these incidents can negatively affect the parent-child relationship.

Stress is an inevitable aspect of life, often triggered by significant events or daily stressors like arguments with parents, sibling conflicts, and teasing from peers. These relatively small stressors, termed daily hassles, are essential for comprehending stress and its manifestations in humans [4]. Research has shown that stress adversely impacts family functioning, children's development, and parents' mental health [5, 6].

According to Belsky's theory [1], the key factors influencing parenting behaviour include the parent's personality, the child's characteristics, environmental stressors, and social support. The concept of "daily hassles" is particularly relevant to families, especially in parenting, as children frequently present parents with numerous daily situations that can

be perceived as minor irritations or annoyances. These minor stresses likely reflect developmental changes in the child, particularly when the child is young. During the transition from infancy to early childhood, a child's growing autonomy and emerging sense of self can pose unique challenges for parents. Research on minor stresses, or "daily hassles," suggests that this context may be especially meaningful and relevant for conceptualizing stress [7]. There is, however, some debate on whether hassles should be considered genuine stresses or merely reflections of individual mood or psychopathology [8, 9].

There is no doubt that parenting can be demanding at times. Parents must discipline their children while fostering a secure environment for their growth. This study aims to evaluate the extent of daily hassles parents encounter due to routine child-related occurrences and how these affect their quality of life.

## **Materials and Methods**

### **Study Group and Study Design**

The present study was a cross-sectional investigation conducted among parents visiting the paediatric department of ESIC Medical College and Hospital, K. K. Nagar, Chennai. The study's purpose was explained to the participants, who were then provided with the Parental Daily Hassle and SF-12 Quality of Life [10] questionnaires. Participants were allotted 10 minutes to complete the forms. The collected data was subsequently analyzed using SPSS software (version 20.0). Inclusion criteria included parents willing to participate and having children under the age of eight years. The participants also should be from two-parent families. Exclusion criteria encompassed parents of children with disabilities or mental health issues, as well as pregnant mothers.

## Methodology

Informed consent was obtained from all study participants, and ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Ethics Committee (IEC-PDCH 20/20-2023). The study involved both fathers and mothers, totalling 247 participants, with 129 mothers and 118 fathers. Participation was anonymous, and respondents voluntarily completed the survey. The parents were asked to complete the questionnaire based on their experiences over the previous four weeks. The survey included sections on daily parenting hassles, mental health, family support, and co-parenting. A pre-tested and validated questionnaire was used, incorporating the Parental Daily Hassle and SF-12 Quality of Life [10] scales. This questionnaire allowed parents to assess 20 common daily hassles associated with parenting, such as chores, supervision, and managing children in public places. Data collected from the questionnaires were analyzed using SPSS software version 20.0.

### Parenting Daily Hassles (PDH) Scale

The Parental Daily Hassle (PDH) Scale assessed parents' perceptions of the minor inconveniences and daily annoyances associated with parenting. This scale was developed in response to recent research highlighting the potentially harmful effects of perceived minor daily stresses, as opposed to traditional stress measures focusing on significant life events. The PDH Scale consists of 20 items that describe specific events involving challenging child behaviours or various parenting tasks. The combined scores of these items indicate the overall intensity of the hassles, with a total score greater than 70 suggesting a high level of daily hassle intensity.

### SF-12 (Short form-12) Scale

The SF-12 Health Survey, a 12-item questionnaire, assessed general health outcomes from the patient's perspective. As a

general patient-reported outcome (PRO) measure, the SF-12 evaluates overall health and well-being, health-related quality of life (HRQOL), and the impact of various conditions on multiple functional areas. The SF-12 includes 12 items derived from the SF-36 Health Survey, covering the same eight health domains: physical functioning (PF), role-physical (RP), bodily pain (BP), general health (GH), vitality (VT), social functioning (SF), role-emotional (RE), and mental health (MH). While there are no cut-off scores, higher scores indicate a better quality of life.

### Statistical Analysis

The collected data were entered and analyzed using SPSS Software version 20.0 (IBM, Chicago, IL). A chi-square test was done to determine significant differences in parental daily hassles between fathers and mothers and between parents of children below four and those with children above four years of age. Additionally, an independent sample T-test was used to identify significant differences in quality of life between fathers and mothers and between parents with children under four years of age and those with children over four years of age.

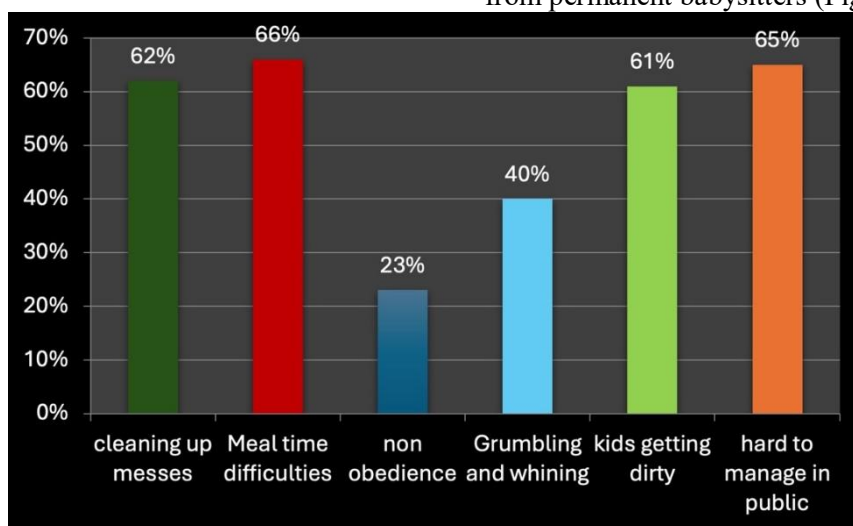
### Results

In this study, the daily hassles experienced by parents were investigated. The findings indicated that a higher proportion of fathers reported high levels of hassle compared to mothers, while more mothers experienced moderate levels of hassle than fathers. However, the difference was not statistically significant (Table 1). When categorizing the participants based on their children's ages, it was observed that parents with children aged 1 to 4 years experienced potentially high-intensity hassles, whereas those with children older than four years reported facing moderate or minimal hassles (Table 2). These differences were statistically significant ( $p=0.010$ ).

### Challenges-Turned-Difficulties

More than 60% of parents reported facing challenges, including cleaning up toys, food, and other messes, dealing with mealtime difficulties, managing their children in public, and handling situations where children get

dirty. However, only one-fourth of the respondents indicated that their children did not obey their directions, despite 40% of the participants regularly encountering grumbling and whining. Additionally, the study's results suggested that most parents did not seek help from permanent babysitters (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Challenges Perceived as Difficulties by Parents

**Table 1.** Comparison of Intensity of Hassle between Fathers and Mothers

Intensity of hassle	Mothers (N)	Fathers (N)	Total	Chi-square value	P- Value
Potentially high	8	11	19	4.845	0.089
Moderate	118	98	216		
Minimal	3	9	12		

**Table 2.** Comparison of the Intensity of Hassle Faced by Parents with Children below and above Four Years of Age

Intensity of hassle	Parents with children aged 1-4 years (N)	Parents with children aged above 4 Years (N)	Total	Chi-square value	P- Value
Potentially high	12	7	19	9.115	0.010
Moderate	100	116	216		
Minimal	1	11	12		

### Quality of Life Perceived by the Parents

Furthermore, parents' quality of life (QOL) was assessed to determine the impact of perceived daily hassles. Initially, the participants were categorized as fathers and mothers. The analysis revealed that the QOL scores of mothers were marginally better, though not statistically significant ( $p= 0.692$ ) (Table 3). Subsequently, parents were grouped based on their children's ages: those with children aged 1-4 years and those with children older than four years. The results indicated that parents with children above four years had comparatively better QOL scores than those with 1-4-year-old children, although the difference was not statistically significant (Table 4).

### Impact on the Physical and Mental Status of the Parents

In this study, 38% of participants reported having acceptable health, while 36% reported good health. However, 22% of participants indicated difficulty in performing daily activities due to the negative impact on mental health status, whereas the remaining did not experience such difficulties. More than 50% of respondents reported that emotional issues, anxiety, and depression hindered their ability to perform or accomplish tasks as they did in the past, highlighting the significant impact of these factors on parents' mental health (Figures 2, 3).

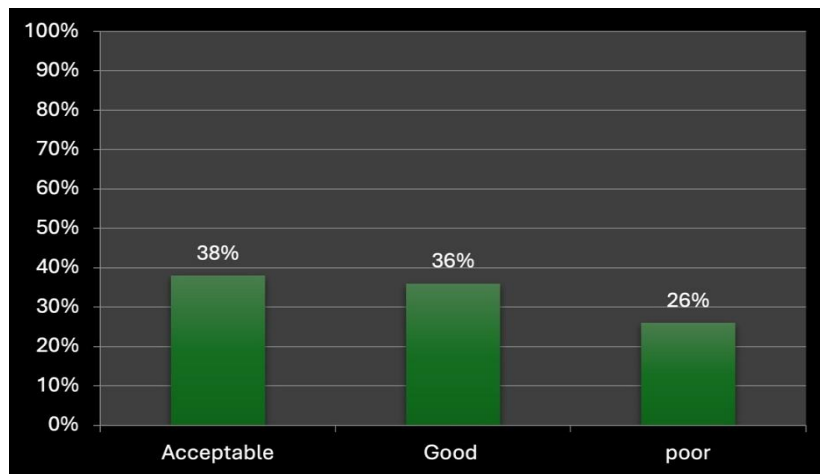


Figure 2. Self-Perceived Physical Health Status of the Parents

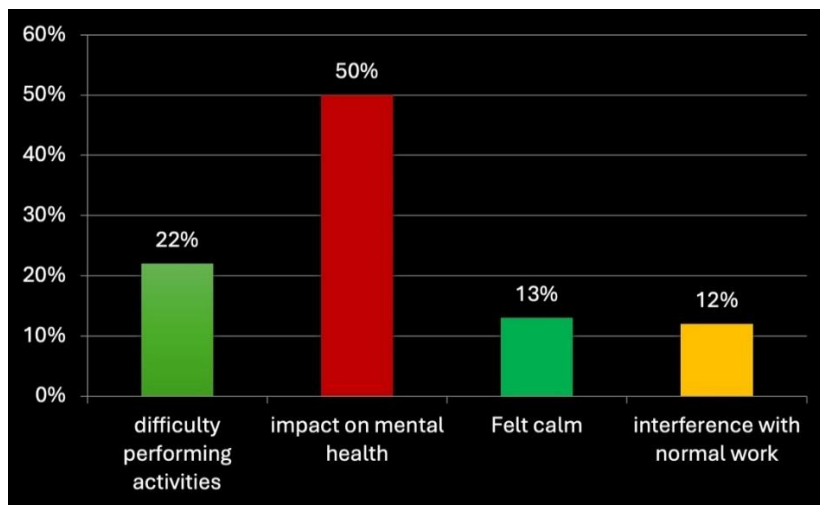


Figure 3. Impact on the Mental Health Status of the Parents

**Table 3.** Comparison of Quality of Life between Fathers and Mothers

Group	No. of Participants	Mean	Standard Deviation	P-Value	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							Lower	Upper
Mothers	129	57.53	11.110	0.692	0.671	1.692	-2.662	4.005
Fathers	118	56.86	15.317					

**Table 4.** Comparison of Quality of Life of Parents with Children below Four Years and above Four Years of Age

Group	No. of Participants	Mean	Standard Deviation	P-Value	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							Lower	Upper
Parents with children aged 1-4 years	134	56.35	15.291	0.270	1.870	1.693	-1.465	5.206
Parents with children aged above 4 Years	113	58.22	10.335					

## Discussion

The findings of this study are significant in various respects, particularly in illustrating that the daily challenges of parenting establish a framework for normative stress that significantly influences parents' satisfaction and well-being. Understanding the impact of minor parenting pressures on parenting style and satisfaction is essential, with certain developmental trends differing somewhat between mothers and fathers.

This study examined the daily hassles in the lives of parents, revealing that a higher proportion of fathers reported perceiving hassles as potentially higher intensity compared to mothers. In contrast, a higher fraction of mothers felt that the hassles were in moderation compared to fathers. These findings were in

contrast to a well-known 'parental burnout' study by Roskam *et al.* in 2017, which stated that the prevalence of burnout was similar among both mothers and fathers because fathers are increasingly becoming involved in all parenting aspects [11]. Parental burnout, here, is referred to as a parental syndrome resulting from chronic exposure to persistent parenting stress [12]. However, in the current study, the higher intensity of hassles perceived by fathers could be because, in the southernmost region of India, the majority of fathers only play a minor role in child-rearing responsibilities, as shown by previous reports, which in turn, denude the fathers of stress-combating abilities in household chores. Studies have also reported that, in several countries, the mothers act as the dominant caretakers of the children, and the father's role is only ancillary [13].

Additionally, the study assessed the impact of perceived daily hassles on fathers and mothers based on their self-reported quality of life. It revealed that the mothers reported better quality of life than the fathers, although the difference was not statistically significant. This better quality could be ascribed to mothers being better managers of household chores, including child-rearing responsibilities, than fathers [14]. Notably, mothers managed daily hassles more efficiently than fathers, which aligned well with the results of previous studies [15].

In addition, it was demonstrated that the parents of children aged 1 to 4 years perceived the hassles to be of potentially high intensity when compared to parents with children aged above four years, who, in turn, perceived the hassles to be in moderation or minimal when compared to parents and children aged 1 to 4 years. This could be attributed to the fact that children in their toddler stage warrant utmost attention, which further intensifies the hassles faced by parents compared to those with older children. This feature, in turn, substantiates the fact that the parents of children above four years exhibited a better quality of life when compared to those of children from 1 to 4 years of age. This finding is supported by previous studies, which stated that parenting stress declines as children age [16, 17]. However, reports of exceptional cases have demonstrated that parenting stress may increase as their children grow older [18].

This study, moreover, suggested that more than 60% of the parents perceived their day-to-day challenges of child-rearing, such as cleaning up the messes, dealing with mealtime difficulties, and managing the children in public, as significant difficulties, which could be attributed to various factors such as socio-demographic circumstances of the family, specific characteristic traits of the children, which could sometimes be more demanding, parenting cognitions and traditions, and family

dynamics and functioning. These findings were supported by Mikolajczak *et al.* in 2018, who correlated the factors mentioned above with the phenomenon of parental burnout [12]. In contradiction, the study results also demonstrated that only one-fourth of the participants suggested that their children did not obey their directions. This further reinforces Mikolajczak's theory that the stressors perceived by parents are more likely to stem from the parents' background and not solely from the child's behaviour [12].

Regarding the physical and mental status of the parents involved in the study, three-fourths of the population reported having an acceptable to good health status. This finding could be because all the parents were relatively young (less than 45 years of age) and systemically healthy so they could cope with the stressors more efficiently. However, the findings also revealed that even though the parents were able to bounce back to their physical well-being, more than 50% of the participants indicated that these day-to-day hassles negatively impacted their mental health. This finding aligned well with that of previous reports, which suggested that parenting stress can have several negative effects on the mental and physical well-being of parents. These impacts extend to the couple's functioning as well as the behaviour and development of their children. In addition, a fraction of the participants reported difficulty performing their daily routine activities and felt a hindrance in performing their basic day-to-day tasks [12].

It is widely speculated that the time fathers spend with their children is just as important as the time, the mothers spend. This shared time is essential for enriching children's cognitive development and fostering emotional stimulation. It also helps build a stronger attachment between children and their parents [19]. Paternal accessibility and emotional connection have been shown to influence children's behaviour positively [20, 21].

Therefore, it is crucial that fathers, beyond their traditional role as primary breadwinners in India, become more actively involved in the daily care of their children [22]. The impact of a father's time with his children is as vital and meaningful as that of the mother [23]. As children's behavior improves, parents experience less stress, creating a positive and reinforcing cycle.

## Conclusion

The character of a child is profoundly influenced by their parents. Caring for active children can be exhausting, particularly in contemporary settings where both parents often work and return home fatigued after a full day at the office. This cumulative exhaustion exacerbates parenting challenges, as parents are already weary upon returning home. To ensure a joyful childhood for their children, parents

## References

- [1]. Belsky, J., 1984, The determinants of parenting: A process model. *Child Development*. 55(1), 83–96.
- [2]. Taylor, John., 2019, "Structural validity of the parenting daily hassles intensity scale." *Stress and Health*. 35.2: 176-186.
- [3]. Crnic, Keith A., and Mark T. Greenberg., 1990, "Minor parenting stresses with young children." *Child development*. 61.5: 1628-1637.
- [4]. Compas, B. E., Howell, D. C., Phares, V., Williams, R. A., & Ledoux, N., 1989, Parent, child stress and symptoms: An integrative analysis. *Developmental Psychology*. 25: 550–559.
- [5]. Crnic and Shayna S. Coburn., 2021, "Stress and parenting". Psychological insights for understanding COVID-19 and families, parents, and children. 103-130.
- [6]. Lee, Dohoon, et al., 2013, "The Great Recession, genetic sensitivity, and maternal harsh parenting." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. 110.34: 13780-13784.

need to spend quality time with them. To prevent mental and physical burnout, parents must develop self-control and self-care strategies. In conclusion, this study revealed that parents of elementary and kindergarten-aged children face greater challenges with daily parenting tasks and exhibit higher levels of stress, anxiety, and depression.

## Acknowledgment

The authors thank the study participants and the Department of Public Health Dentistry for their participation and cooperation.

## Funding

Nil.

## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no Conflicts of Interest.

- [7]. DeLongis, Anita, et al., 1982, "Relationship of daily hassles, uplifts, and major life events to health status." *Health Psychology*. 1.2:119.
- [8]. Lazarus, Richard S., et al., 1985, "Stress and adaptational outcomes: the problem of confounded measures." 770.
- [9]. Dohrenwend, Bruce P., and Patrick E. Shrout., 1985, "Hassles" in the conceptualization and measurement of life stress variables." 780.
- [10]. John E., Ware, Jr., Mark Kosinski & Susan D. Keller., 1996, "A 12-Item Short-Form Health Survey: Construction of Scales and Preliminary Tests of Reliability and Validity".220-233
- [11]. Roskam I., Raes M. E., Mikolajczak M., 2017, Exhausted Parents: Development and Preliminary Validation of the Parental Burnout Inventory. *Front Psychol*. 8:163.
- [12]. Mikolajczak, Moira, et al., 2022, "Exhausted parents: Sociodemographic, child-related, parent-related, parenting and family-functioning correlates of parental burnout." *Key Topics in Parenting and Behavior*. Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland. 57-69.



- [13]. Nair S., Chandramohan S., Sundaravathanam N., Rajasekaran A. B., Sekhar R., 2020, Father Involvement in Early Childhood Care: Insights From a MEL System in a Behavior Change Intervention Among Rural Indian Parents. *Front Public Health*. 8:516.
- [14]. Chen, Bin-Bin., 2020, "The relationship between Chinese mothers' parenting stress and sibling relationships: A moderated mediation model of maternal warmth and co-parenting." *Early Child Development and Care*. 190.9: 1350-1358.
- [15]. Barroso, Nicole E., et al., 2018, "Parenting stress through the lens of different clinical groups: A systematic review & meta-analysis." *Journal of abnormal child psychology*. 46: 449-461.
- [16]. Qian G., Mei J., Tian L., Dou G., 2021, Assessing Mothers' Parenting Stress: Differences Between One- and Two-Child Families in China. *Front Psychol*. 11:609715.
- [17]. Li C., 2005, Relationship between parenting stress and marital quality in mothers with preschool children. *Chinese Mental Health Journal*. 19(2):136.
- [18]. Parkes J., Caravale B., Marcelli M., Franco F., Colver A., 2011, Parenting stress and children with cerebral palsy: a European cross-sectional survey. *Dev. Med. Child Neurol*. 53 815–821.
- [19]. Pleck J. H., 2010, In: *Paternal involvement: Revised conceptualization and theoretical linkages with child outcomes*. Lamb M., editor. Wiley and Son; New York. pp. 58–93.
- [20]. Amato P. R., Rejac S. J., 1994, Contact with nonresident parents, inter-parental conflict, and children's behavior. *Journal of Family Issues*. 15:191–207.
- [21]. Amato P. R., Rivera F., 1999, Paternal involvement and children's behavioral problems. *Journal of Marriage and Family*. 61:375–384.
- [22]. Sayer L., Bianchi S., Robinson J., 2004, Are parents investing less in children? Trends in mothers' and fathers' time with children. *American Journal of Sociology*. 110:1–43.
- [23]. Felfe C., Hsin A., 2012, Maternal work conditions and child development. *Econ Educ Rev*. (6):1037-1057.